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SUBJECT: Former President Roh Commits Suicide

**¶1.** (U) Former President Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) committed suicide on May 23. After leaving a note for his family, Roh left his home in Bongha Village outside Busan at 5:45 AM to climb a nearby mountain and leapt into a ravine at 6:40 AM. He was accompanied by one security guard, who drove Roh to nearby Seyoung Hospital. Roh was unconscious upon arrival and had serious head injuries. Seyoung Hospital transferred Roh to Busan University Hospital where he arrived at 8:13 AM. He never regained consciousness and was pronounced dead at 9:30 AM.

**¶2.** (U) According to unconfirmed media reports, Roh wrote his family, "These days have been so hard. I made many people suffer. I could not even read a book. Please erect a small tombstone near the village. Aren't life and death eventually one? Please cremate me and don't blame me."

**¶3.** (U) No decisions have been announced as to whether there will be a state or private funeral. Roh is the first Korean president to pass away since Park Chung-hee was assassinated in 1979, except for Choi Kyu-ha, who served for nine months after Park's assassination, died in 2006.

**¶4.** (U) Roh has been under investigation, along with his wife and children, for accepting some USD6 million in bribes while in office. On April 30 he underwent a day of questioning by prosecutors and in a statement to the press expressed shame and regret for his actions. Roh rose to power based on a reputation for high moral standards and his involvement in the bribery scandal left many of his supporters in the Democratic Party deeply disappointed.

STANTON